

flesh & fantasy

THE STUDENT
INSURGENT
ISSUE 37.1

i



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Playlist ----- **page 3**

男旦 ----- **page 4**

"individuality" ----- **page 5**

Acne, Eden, Figure Drawing Four, Rye art ----- **page 6**

Dick ----- **page 7**

(temperate normativity) ----- **page 9**

"Pig, Dog, Tortoise" & "Balloon Animals" ----- **page 10**

Assexuality and Sapphics ----- **page 11**

Buffalo ----- **page 13**

Girl Dinner ----- **page 15**

Divine Flesh Photoshoot ----- **page 17**

Bush or No Bush ----- **page 19**

Crazy, Crunchy Vessels ----- **page 20**

Don't Worry ----- **page 21**

The Hearth ----- **page 23**

Dorm in Summer ----- **page 25**

My Lucella ----- **page 26**

Midsummer Shadow ----- **page 29**

Venom ----- **page 31**

"Dream Life" & "Endless Sea" ----- **page 32**

"Synesthetic portrait" & Flora's Collage
----- **page 33**

Body Positivity ----- **page 34**



Letter from the Collective

Windows Media Player

Now Playing Library Rip

Welcome to the Flesh & Fantasy issue of the Student Insurgent, the 2nd magazine of this school year! Insurgent has gone through a lot of change in the last year, and as a student org, doing this magazine is a constant learning process. I hope you'll see how much we've learned this year. I think of Insurgent as an exercise in self-organization and collective action, respectively the goal and method of anarchism. Enjoy this issue with an open heart and mind, dream big and fight for what you believe in. Love, Eclipse

Windows Media Player

File View Play Tools Help

I hope that in this issue of The Insurgent, it's clear that desire and horror kiss with tongue. - Stella

Ready

Internet WebStar Explore

Home About me Rules

hail everypony! I love this emo ass theme, the photoshoot was everything to me— the different horror b-movie aesthetics are so instrumental and though I never expressed those thoughts to the models, THEY KILLED THEMING IN THE OUTFIT DEPARTMENT. Every issue in the Insurgent is a baby to me but this one is my weird child that I am supporting through hot topic runs and monster energy pipeline peach, amen to flesh and fantasy!! - Alexa

Toxicity
System Of A Down

00:26 03:02

DANGER

THAT ONE SCENE FROM THE SUBSTANCE WHEN MONSTRO ELISABETH SPRAYS HER BLOOD ALL OVER THE AUDIENCE - IVY

STRANGE

Marlboro

bodies bodies bodies !! screaming flesh dripping fantasyyyy!! - caarrp

Hell is a teen girl

Bloodsucker

I BITE!

KISS ME

SPIT

RADIOHEAD

SYSTEM[OK] SERVER[ON]

I want to use this space to give gratitude as I go through a hard moment. The collective supports me while I go through bad health, the love of my life has gladly taken care of me while I am too weak, my community has given me grace while I step back, and I couldn't be more grateful. Thank you, and I can't get through it without you. Love to all,

-steg (clover <3)



BIOHAZARD

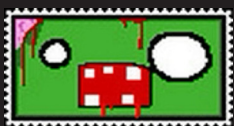
Library Rip

CD Player

Artist: Slowdive

Track: Souvlaki Space Station

slowdive - souvlaki



blood, gore, body horror!!!! A lot of horror the fantasy makes me think of flesh horrors beyond comprehension. Very gross very off putting. - Mason

gore, flesh, love! serving body realness — Finn

Alert:
You are now disconnected.
OK





MELT INTO THIS PLAYLIST



Flesh For Fantasy by Billy Idol
Flex by Cupid
Dracula by Tame Impala
My Type by Saint Motel
One Thing by Lola Young
Locals (Girls Like Us) by underscores
I Fucked Ur Mom by Sorry Mom
Your Dog by Soccer Mommy
As good a reason by Paris Paloma
Feel Better by Penelope Scott
Smoke Alarm by Carsie Blanton
Everybody Scream by Florence and the Machine
human behavior by bjork
Combo by BODY MEAT
How to teleport by Jane Remover
BODIES by Forest
The Hand by Anabelle Dinda

nosferatu man by slint
Texture by Catherine Wheel
BLOOD by NANA, Mika Nakashima
Immaterial by SOPHIE
Cherry Waves by Deftones
Closer by Nine Inch Nails
Megalomaniac by KMFDM
Vivica by Jack off Kill
Hatefuck by The Bravery
Wet by Dazey and the Scouts
Beware by Deftones
Lips by Jane Remover
Faceshopping by SOPHIE
Toungewister by Magdalena Bay
Sex Paranoia by Goldilox
Somebody I'm Not by Eli
Punish by Ethel Cain

Considering Individuality

By Eclipse

Our bodies are combinations of billions of organisms which take up highly specified tasks to keep our complicated bodies alive. The human form is beautiful in so many ways. Even though most of us have two hands, two eyes, and two legs, each of our bodies are an immense cocktail of human difference. Each one of us has features physical, biological, and chemical which make us unique from the 8 billion other humans on the planet. Often society clumps us into groups, proscribes identities and personalities, and universalizes experiences. It causes conflict and friction when we expect others to feel just as we do.

Stereotypes cause us to disindividualize people, particularly communities who are already subjected to mistreatment. Forgetting or ignoring the fact that every one of us is an individual promotes universalized treatment of groups of people, which fails to address individual needs.

This collage is dedicated to the vast spectrum of human experience which makes each human being who they are. Art represents the experiences and personalities

of its creator, and thus every piece is an original creation- just like the person who made it. The macro and micro differences in our experiences, personalities, and bodies are what make life so dynamic and interesting. It may be hard to see sometimes, but each of us is full of perspectives and ideas, and exploring them together can be an immensely satisfying opportunity.



"this isn't chicken" by steg

Art by Rye



Background by Kat, Sam, and Estella

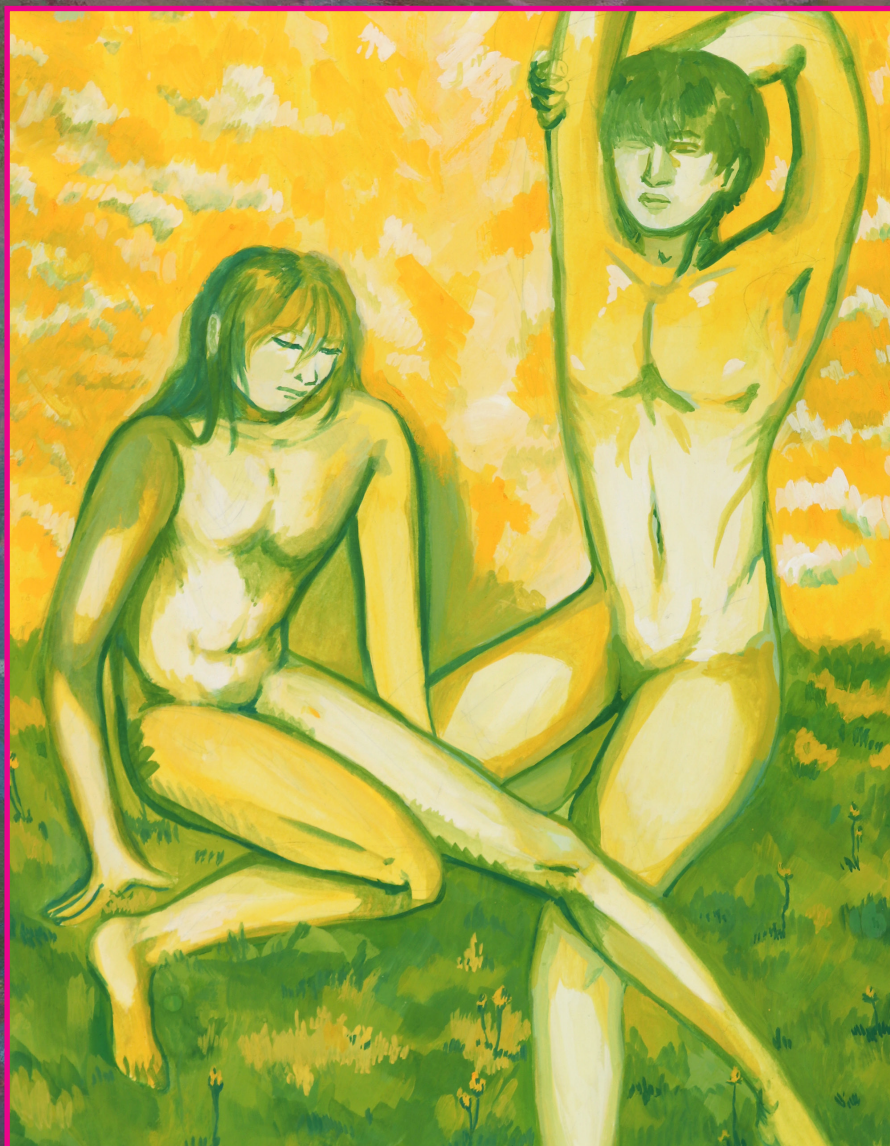
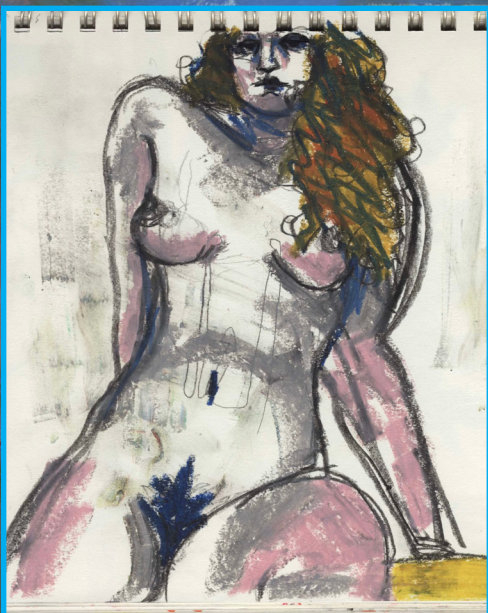


Art by Eclipse

Art by
Mason



Art by
Estella



Art by Toby

Dick

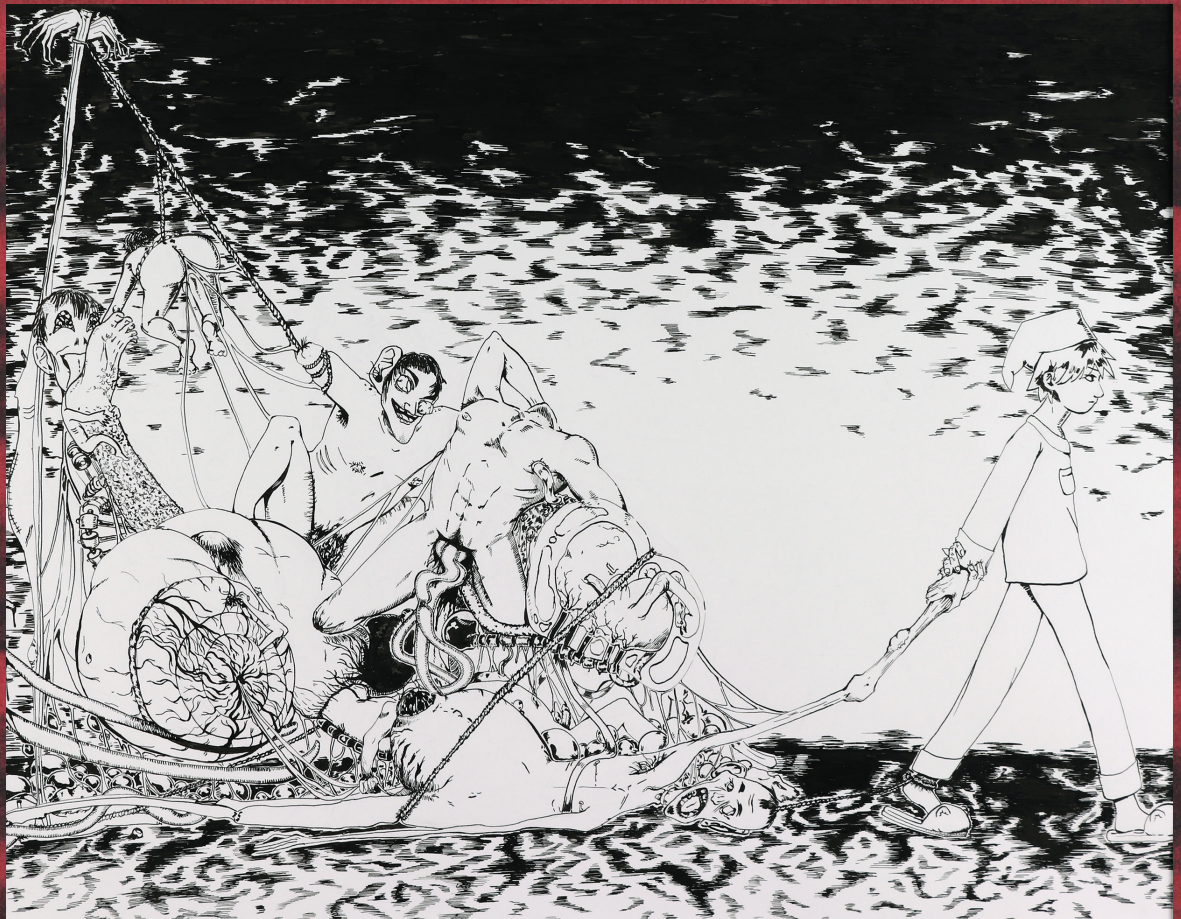
By Viridescence

“Boy” illustrated
by Toby

Collage by
Viridescence,

Background by Kat

*Trigger Warning:
Mention of suicide.*



As a trans woman, I will never get bottom surgery. I love my dick. I love how it feels, I love pleasuring myself, and I love how it looks. I love the word “Dick” and all its meanings. I’ve never felt dysphoric about my dick, and that makes me no less of a woman. Womanhood has and will continue to change me so much physically and emotionally, but I will always have my dick.

I don’t want to be reduced down to just my genitals. Trans people are treated as inherently sexual while shamed for expressing their sexuality. I don’t want people thinking about the genitals I have or thinking my gender expression is some kink. I just want to live my life as a woman and have people truly see me as one.

Dating a trans woman or even finding one attractive is seen as a joke to so many cis het people. Genitalia seems to be all that matters to them. I’ve never understood having a “preference” for the genitals your partner has. Genitals shouldn’t change your attraction.

We deserve to be loved by more than just each other. The genitals you’re attracted to don’t define your sexuality, you do, and society as a whole needs to deconstruct this association. What you like is for you and your partners alone to know. Identify with whatever makes you happy and stop caring about how others identify.

Few people want to even date us, and we still have wants of our own that need to be met. Chasers, cis people who date exclusively trans people

are a real threat to us too. We’re treated as sex objects to them and pressured into pausing our transitions because they don’t see us as our desired gender. They prey on us because a lot of us are vulnerable people.

I feel like I’m forced into bisexuality to open myself up to as much as possible but I don’t know if that’s what I am. I’ve only been in one relationship my whole life, which ended as a negative experience for the both of us because I stayed much longer than I should’ve. I was not being treated well at all, but I felt like I had to cling on to what felt like my one chance at love.

I feel like my presence in public alone is wrong and perverse. I hate being perceived. I don’t like attention. I want to disappear. Being a transgender woman takes so much confidence, but it’s confidence I’ve never had. Everything is so much harder than before.

Mirrors only make me realize how ugly I feel. Trying to put makeup on only makes me feel worse. I want to feel beautiful. I want to be confident. I want to be loved. I want to see what I can become but is it even worth all the suffering it causes me?

I hate having to talk and hear about how transphobia affects cis people too as if transphobia affecting trans people isn’t enough to make people care. I’m tired of cis women speaking over us and policing our identities. I’m tired of being jealous of other trans women who are further along in their transitions than me even

though it's so hard not to.

I hate my body hair, it never stops growing. I have to shave almost daily. My skin is covered in razor burns and ingrown hairs from cheap razors and the sloppy job I do. There's always a spot I miss. I don't want to have to put effort into shaving. I just want it gone.

I hate my voice, it prevents me from talking so often. Every word I speak I decide to talk with my normal masculine voice and feel like shit, or force myself to soften my voice, being forced to repeat myself multiple times because I'm not loud enough. I just want a feminine voice but I have no motivation to voice train at all.

I hate how I can't cry. I'm miserable all of the time, yet I'm incapable of producing a single tear. Male socialization has fucked my whole life up. I feel like I'm past the point of crying. I feel like an emotionless husk. I wish I could sob until I physically couldn't anymore.

I hate how I can't make friends. Everything changed for me when I realized I was queer. I can't talk to people at all. I can't make eye contact for the life of me. My social skills are horrible. I'm just so unconfident. I've only made friends by having people talk to me first. I'm physically incapable of speaking first. I run out of things to talk about with others so easily.

I hate how I never got to have a real relationship with my family. I was close with my older brother until addiction changed him for the worse. I'm glad he's better now but things will never be the same between us. I love my younger brother and he really looks up to me, but we've never been close. I stuck to my older brother when I should have stuck to him. I've never been close with my

parents. They've always been very out of touch with my life and still are. I only really talk to them when I'm back home, but even then it's not often.

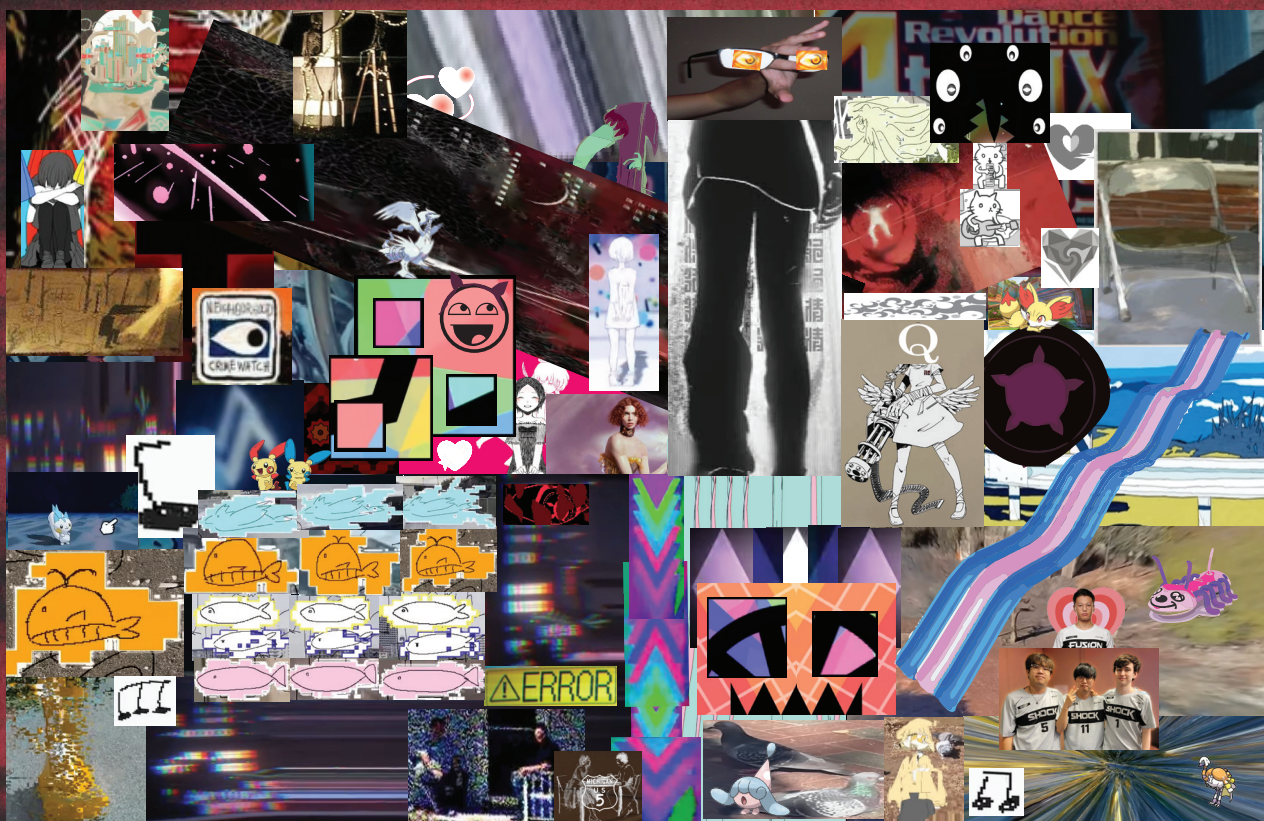
I hate being alone. I exist in so many spaces but I can never feel a sense of belonging. Nobody knows what goes on in my life. I want to tell people how my day went, how I feel, things I've done, but I can't. I'm too depressed to make friends, but I'm so depressed because I can't. I've spent so much of my life running, hiding from my identity, hiding because I can only feel safe when I'm alone. I don't have to perform for anybody when I'm alone.

I've thought about killing myself hundreds of times, my reasons, how I'd be remembered, who would care, all the times I've fucked up, and all the times I've embarrassed myself. It's become a daily thought, but I'm too much of a coward to ever really do it. I just have nothing going for me. I have no plans for my future. I'm doing nothing with my life. Living has no impact on others.

I know my problems and how they can be fixed, but it's too much to handle. I feel a crushing weight on top of me preventing me from ever making change. I get so upset over the smallest things. Therapy has never helped me. My days move from one deadline to the next. I spend all my time wasting away online. I fight every day to stay alive, but I don't understand why.

I just feel pathetic. I want things to get better but I know they never will. Every time things look up in my life something bad always happens. The news becomes

more and
more grim
every day.
I have no
motivation
to do
anything
more than
the bare
minimum.
There is just
no pleasure
continuing
to live, yet
I still hang
on for some
small chance
I one day get
to see
a
better
me.



I've become sickly,
looking over my shoulder
for a guy with a wide smile.

Often strictly business
clocked left and right
left again, falling into brush.
A prick from a rose bush
as I regain my feet.

If I blink fast enough,
my eyes roll back, I get
2 seconds of release, a thief

behind my eyelids prys me open
again and again, I pause to say, "I
want away from this light."

I look around me and
the watercolor bleeds along
the seams of this scene.

"I wanna go back", I say,
but I dipped below the surface
so the words become lost reverberations in this pool.
They all kick, flip turn at the wall in a fluid stroke
And I cradle my legs when their waves reach my face.
I bubble back up slowly.

"It's not really like much has changed~" says a bird
on my shoulder, they follow me around and give unsolicited
advice,

I turn to see the blind spot to the right of my head once
again, my breath condensates,
blinds my vision in spite.
I grapple with the straps
Of my backpack, pulling
tighter, tightest,
Graphite and gridpaper
hugs me back, limp + bound.

I awake again, cut to, the
sun has risen, and strategically
fragmented mirrors reflect soft
sunbeams around my bedroom.
If it's just me here, why do I
Keep feeling you longing to
be here too?

If I keep looking,
this becomes symptoms of
Insanity, if I keep
wondering, will I
ostracize my existence into exile?

If I keep feeling, my head will get
the best of me, I was never much for
sustained security. I slip out of ties,
binds, blankets, beds, much too quickly.

(temperate normativity)
-caarrp

"Super power bandit
star [*redacted*] keeps relevant the last 48 hours of reality"
reads the newspaper, a telling story.
I sit down, my breakfast and coffee
are served to me, I barely nod, fully engrossed in the story, as I
start to sip joe, I enjoy my nuclear fantasy.

Maybe I had been disappointed,
I thought I was known, to the
capacity of me, but rather
I was felt an ocean half full,
or 3 quarters empty.

"You can really only know
so much, I mean, humans
are selfish creatures", the
bird continues.

In the cemetery now, I sit
by my grandmother, or a dusted up
version.

Then I say, "burn everything",
and look around.
We seem to be in consensus.

I think of the bodies of people around me,
and notice the dotted lines
that have formed boundaries.

"Who started planning these walls?"
I look around, and
I am alone.

I blink faster and finally close my eyes. I think, "sweet
victory" but the fire has begun lapping at the outer edges of
my cerebral cortex. Grey matter chars lightly and the
Pink bits underneath churn, flip and twist.

I think, "I need water"

I inspect the holes of the showerhead propelling 47 streams at
me,

I open my eyes wider. This feeling sits stagnant under my skin,
drips hit and fall across it, gliding to my toes, soles,
I lazily turn the water to 73 degrees, luke cold.

I hate this discomfort, unknowing, willingly ignorant,
I want to see it believe it, say it, scream it, hold you, feel it,
be, within what I want to know is possibly happening.
Why can't I tell what is happening,
and I don't have the courage or desire to find out.
Not from here, I am much too far away.

Photo by FFH

Blind me,
inhuman,
pig, dog, tortoise
that we buried

the sunrays in my eyes, on my skin
are all I had today
to give me energy
Blind me
so I can't see
this body

**the shadow still
looks thin**

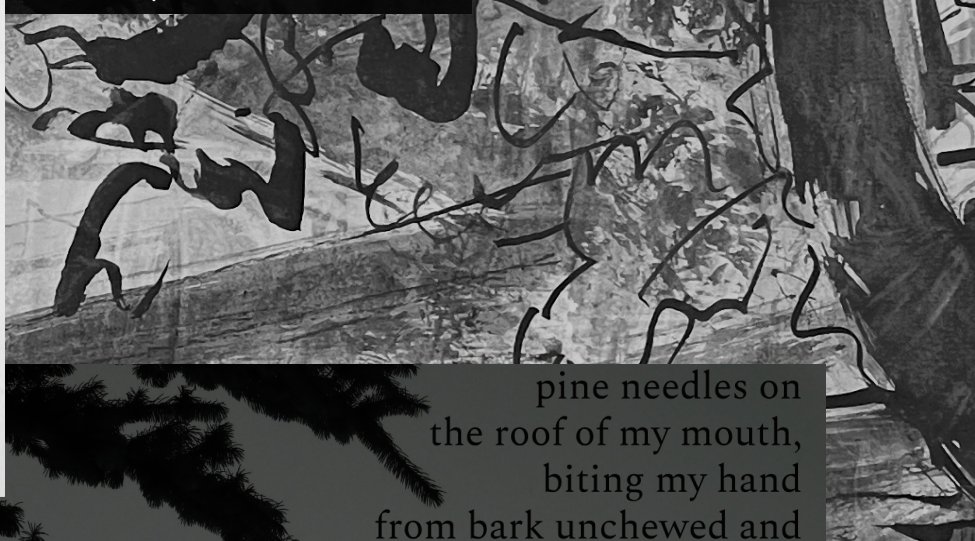
**pig, dog,
tortoise.**



“pig, dog, tortoise” and “Balloon
animals” by Zamboni (below)



Illustration by Rye



pine needles on
the roof of my mouth,
biting my hand
from bark unchewed and
ate yesterday,
mangled me wholly.

drink the rainwater and
the baptism wrinkles
my fingers, the rubbing of balloons, I
lose all blood,
the ugly amber in the water,
it prunes
the mountain ranges of the hand,
I couldn't climb,
I could never touch
Balloon animals

Background
by Estella





Throughout my teen years, I attributed my lack of interest in boys, in conventionally attractive celebrities, in porn, and in sex to my adherence to a strictly puritanical religion and a history of adverse experiences with physical touch. I later discovered I was not a very pious straight girl; I was in fact a very horny lesbian who didn't know any other gay girls to be horny for. 'But wait!' You say. 'What was stopping you from being horny for the straight girls?' That, my friends, is truly the question.

I've been told I think too much about attraction to be allo. Apparently, most people don't read and dissect a person's Hinge profile before deciding if the photos are hot. Apparently, most people don't decide if people are hot at all. They simply are or are not. Spare maybe once, I've never felt sexually attracted to a person who I know wouldn't be attracted to me or wouldn't be a good idea to have sex with: men, straight women, people in relationships, butch4butch or T4T lesbians, etc. I never want, in that way, people who wouldn't want me: stone tops, deeply religious people, people obsessed with hiking or bread (I'm allergic), etc.

Asexual Questioning & Sapphic Reverence

Written by Nicky Barnes

I might feel more seen and understood than among
confidently allosexual people.

11

I do not (yet) identify as asexual. However, the more I learn about the experiences of people who do, the more I wonder if there is a place on that spectrum where

There is one very minor celebrity figure I'd put on a hall-pass list, but I've never fantasized about her. Really, I don't fantasize about anyone. It's situations, faceless archetypes, dialogues and premises, pretenses and sensations. Most of the time, my head and my body take a while to get on the same page. I can orgasm and never feel turned on. I can be desperately aroused and never get wet.

I generally see sex as nothing more than an activity. I've messed around with people I knew I was not attracted

to and enjoyed the physical sensations, the emotional closeness, the positive attention, feeling wanted and attractive. But I've never really experienced what a person might call "blue balls." If my orgasm is ruined, or I have to stop abruptly, I'd be annoyed, and it may take a minute for the blood flow to correct itself. If it happened often, I'd be frustrated in an emotional sense and perhaps a little tense; beyond that, there's really no further inconvenience. But I dissociate a lot, especially from physical feelings. So maybe my brain has learned to put these feelings in a box somewhere, too? Within the experience of one's sexuality it can be hard to say what is orientation, what is experience, what is confidence, what is medical or psychological, and if it even matters.

What I do know for certain is that once I get really comfortable with someone, once I trust them with my physical safely, trust them to consider my feelings genuinely, to be thoughtful and good natured, gradually they start to seem more and more physically and aesthetically attractive to me. I want to touch them. I want to be touched by them. Not always in a sexual way, but sometimes.

I've never understood what people mean when they talk about "needing someone carnally." I love sex. I have an active sex drive, perhaps even over-active, but it's not often about the achieving the orgasm, and it's never really about nor achieving it with a specific person either. Being in a sexual relationship with someone who is often immediately available to me, I find myself wanting her sexually, looking at her sexually, but it's never truly about the sex. I find myself aching to take care of her, to make her feel good, to see her relaxed and comfortable. She'll walk around the apartment dressed for work or going out and I just want to look at her. There's a magnetism that I can't quite describe. She is absolutely beautiful, so perfectly queer in her masculinity. She is soft and steady, strong and pliant. Not to mention her body... my god. And I have the front row seat, the only backstage pass, exclusive VIP access to the most vulnerable parts of her.

In these moments, all I really want is to look at her the way a person might stare for ages at a photo of a long-distance loved one, touch her reverently like a person might run fingertips across the textures and shapes of blown glass. I wouldn't call this a sexual attraction, but this is what drives me to touch her in the quiet moments, the electric moments, the stolen ones, and the created-to-be-given ones. There is teasing done to tease, and displays put on just to rile her up, but the wandering hands, the lingering eyes, this is where they come from.

When she's laid out and disheveled underneath me; when she looks up at me through her lashes, head on my chest; when she finally remembers who's taller and uses this to instill a true gay panic in my chest; she is masterfully blown glass; violently forged metalwork; delicately set with gems and polished to shine; she is intricately carved stone; vines, moss, towering trees, and damp earth that smell like home and feel like haven; she is texture and color and expert design. And she has the capacity to feel so intensely every expression of my awe she receives. Sex is sex, but with her, in the way I feel attracted to her, what would otherwise be called foreplay feels separate from the sex.

I'm sure there is a word for this, the foundation of this queer platonic relationship we've built. I'm sure there are people out there who can relate to this kind of conditioned, gradually developed, largely aesthetic but very sentimental kind of attraction, not at all romantic or possessive and not exactly sexual, truly platonic, or purely aesthetic either. I'm sure there are people who will read this and assume I simply have a fetish for glass and separately have fallen in love with my best friend. For now, I feel seen enough in the intersection between the lesbian sense of reverence, the base desire to worship a sapphic body, and aspect perspectives on deconstructing amatonormativity. I don't currently feel a need to define myself further, but I am endlessly curious about the experiences of unquestioningly allosexual queer people, the other kind of something they seem to feel that I don't, and why so many people look at this beautifully queer, intensely human, and deeply intimate home we have found in each other and say it's not enough.

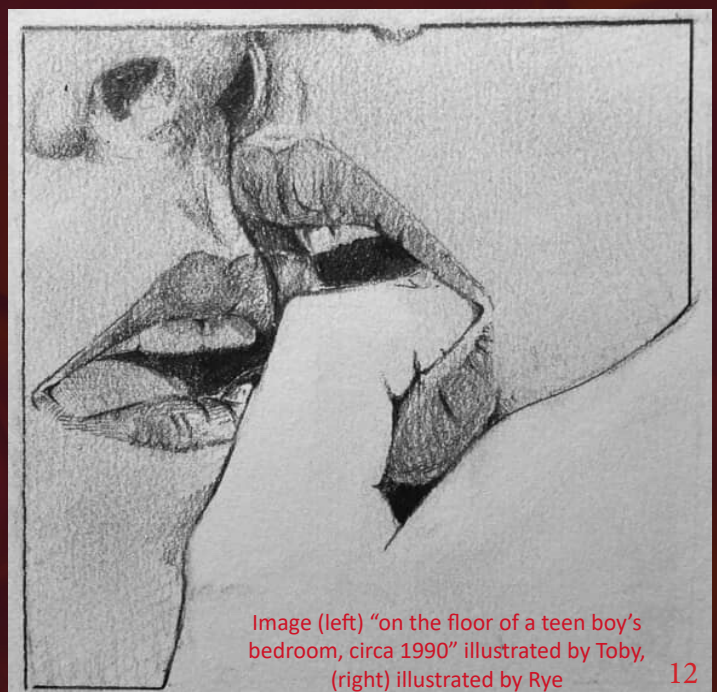


Image (left) "on the floor of a teen boy's bedroom, circa 1990" illustrated by Toby, (right) illustrated by Rye

Buffalo

Written by Eleanor McBride

I see you and I feel you—
and my heart aches.

It aches for
what I have, and what
you did not.

It aches because I have
not celebrated what you've
given me nearly enough.

Lingering shadows over the light,
light touches and firm too. A butch with their
femme in their hands,
hands on hips firmly light;
gentle; tender; strong; safe.

When the music stops and tenderness is
scarce—not gone but shrouded in red and blue
and cold.

When the men emerge from these brightly
loud shadows and breath is held strong. When
the brutality ensued.

I feel you in my bones and see you in my
blood. Haunting history deep in my heart
as it races at the sight of shadowed men.

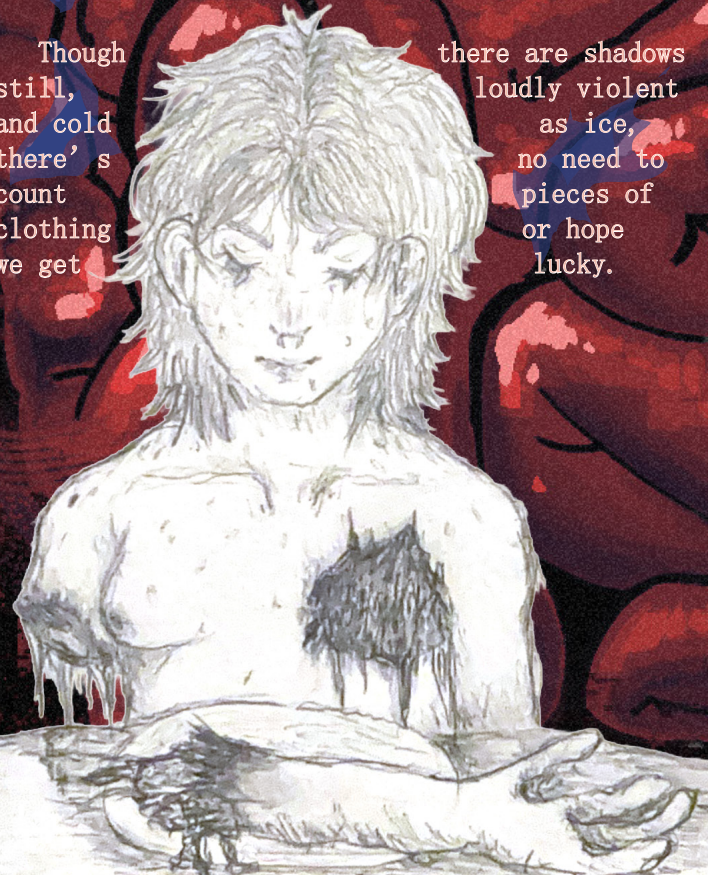
I feel you inside me like guardians of my past,
like a knowing hand on my shoulder.

Let me worship you in dance, slow and light
and tender and safe—

but also rapid and sparkling and vibrant
and tireless—for you have made it possible.

Though
still,
and cold
there's
count
clothing
we get

there are shadows
loudly violent
as ice,
no need to
pieces of
or hope
lucky.





Warm skin on skin, hands on
hips practically sewn together,
bellies warmed with liquor and joy and
love and care as the band showers us in
a melody of light.

Let this be how I pray to you,
how I show my respect and gratitude,
my honor and love.

Let this love and light be an homage to
your strength and passion.

Dance! Slow and fast, vibrant and soft.

Love! Taste flesh on your tongue
and honor bodies entangled in one another.
Fight! Stand strong with and for those you do
not know,

for your neighbors and for strangers.

This is how I—how We must worship you,
commend you, celebrate you and
all you've done for us.

I vow to live full and love
even fuller in your name.

I see you and I feel you—
with a heavy heart, full of love.

"Worship me like
no other"

illustrated by
Alex(a) Abarca
Cruz

GIRL DINNER: The Exploration of Feminism through Cannibalism in Pop Culture

Written by Marceline

Illustration by Alexa Cruz Abarca

The following trigger warnings apply: mentions of sexual assault and misogyny

The consumption of human flesh is utterly horrid and unimaginable to many people, and one of the most taboo topics in our society. Despite the incredibly morbid nature of cannibalism, the topic exploded within pop culture after media began to explore it. Like is shown in *Yellowjackets* and *Hannibal*, cannibalism can be used to portray love or obsession. However, when cannibalism is used as a metaphor for the female experience, it is equally capturing as it is grueling. This subgenre of the female cannibal brings a new type of 'Final Girl' to horror. These films show how a woman could, metaphorically, break free from society's expectations and gain power. It demonstrates that when a woman satisfies her desires and is truly free, she is seen as a monster. The use of women as cannibals also greatly contrasts from the endless amounts of horror that pushes misogyny and directly demeans, sexualizes, and hurts women. Often in horror, sexual assault is used to shock or scare viewers; yet in this subgenre, many of these women are shown to gain their power back and take revenge on the men that hurt from them through cannibalism. Cannibalism, in all its obscenity and gore, captures and explores female sexuality and power—especially the taboo natures of such topics—in a way most media struggles to represent. It shows the feral, hypersexual, or unpleasant traits and actions women are taught to hide, as well as how women are viewed when taking back from the men that have taken from women for centuries. When a woman wants to satiate her desires, she is monstrous. *Raw*, a 2016 film written and directed by Julia Ducournau, uses cannibalism to represent the main character's human consumption as her power, as well as the animalistic side of female sexuality. After the protagonist, Justine, once a lifelong vegetarian, eats a raw rabbit kidney as a hazing ritual, she gets a strong taste for meat. She then leaves behind what was once a core part of herself and her childhood. As her life changes more and more, she begins to bite and tear at her own flesh, especially during sex.

Justine eventually consumes meat from another human—beginning with her own sister's fin-

ger, who is revealed to also be a cannibal. Like her sister, Justine loses control of her cravings, her entire life, and strays far from the girl she was.

Yet Justine welcomes her transformation and becomes much more promiscuous, struggling between animal and human during all of it. The cannibalism empowers her, enabling her to become much more confident in herself and her body. She constantly attempts to sink her teeth into and tear at the men she has sex with. Justine's cannibalism is a direct correlation into her sexuality and relationships with others, as she desires flesh more every time she wants or has sex. Justine is often embarrassed by her urges, both for cannibalism and sex, representing how women are shamed for their sexuality and desires. Her struggles with cannibalism, as are faced by both her sister and mother, show the perils of being a woman passed down from generation to generation.

The film ends with a painful fight between the two cannibalistic sisters, ripping, tearing, and eating one another's flesh, taking each other down from the inside out, and both seen as monsters. *Raw*, in the end, holds a reputation of being one of the most disgusting films in recent times, but the grittiness has a point. It is a film using the gruesome nature of cannibalism to represent the struggles women face with theirs and others' flesh. Therefore, making the metaphor literal. When asked about the themes of the film, Julia Ducournau, the writer and director of *Raw*, said:

"I do think that somehow, symbolically, women want to get rid of that skin that has been sexualized, glamorized, and seen as something that is completely not relatable to women. They want to tear up that skin to be completely raw."

—Julia Ducournau, 2017, *GQ*

How would a woman take a man's body without committing the atrocities men do? *Jennifer's Body*, a debut film released in 2009, directed by Karyn Kusama and starring Megan Fox, explores this question. Megan Fox had previously faced sexualization and exploitation before even reaching legal adulthood, boiling over in her role in the 2007 *Transformers* film. *Jennifer's Body* was originally advertised as a film merely targeting sex appeal, using Megan Fox as a pushing point for this objective. After the film's premiere, many men were highly disappointed that it was, in fact, a movie about a teenage girl navigating her recent assault, sexuality, and power—gained via eating men.

But recently, *Jennifer's Body* has become a cult classic along with the boom of female cannibal films. Jennifer, played by Megan Fox, is kidnapped and assaulted by a band group, leaving her turned into a demon after a ritual gone wrong. The group believed she was a virgin and fit for the ritual, despite Jennifer being labeled as a slut by many. While it is highly alluded to that Jennifer was sexually assaulted, it was not shown, with the ritual being more than enough of a metaphor for how an experience like that changes someone. Jennifer's possession corresponds to the trauma from her recent assault, especially with it being a direct result of the band's sacrifice of her. After her transformation, Jennifer discovers that meat, particularly human flesh, keeps her beautiful and gives her monstrous strength. Luring men in with her body, she uses their sexualization of her body against them to isolate and eat them. This shows another theme of eating men as a form of taking back power and the sexualization of women and femininity by men.

Along with Jennifer's new taste for flesh, her previous feelings for her best friend, Needy, are also exacerbated by her transformation, causing her to make many sexual actions towards Needy that likely wouldn't have been made before, despite Jennifer always having the desire. The cannibalization is based around Jennifer's sexuality and, in certain scenarios, motivated by her best friend, such as when she attacked Needy's boyfriend. The cannibalization represented Jennifer's need to hurt the men that sexualized, hurt, or

threatened her. In the end, Needy was the only one able to take down Jennifer, yet Jennifer's last concern was that her boobs were ruined as Needy stabbed her in the chest. Jennifer, like many women and girls, valued her body and adhering to beauty standards more than her life. Additionally, Jennifer and Needy's complex relationship was greatly demonstrated throughout the film, the two having a somewhat toxic relationship that consumed Needy long before Jennifer had become a cannibal. During *Jennifer's Body*, Jennifer became a monster to successfully hurt the men that hurt her. The cannibalism was able to convey Jennifer's power within femininity, and her complex and grotesque emotions and urges.

These films, while controversial and facing mixed reactions from audiences, accurately capture the experiences of womanhood, femininity, and, in many cases, queerness. The cannibalism shows the ostracization, indignity, and villainization women face living in a patriarchal society. Cannibalism victimizes men's bodies in a way that's still not as cruel as what is so often done to women. The female cannibal has stuck with audiences due to how different this subgenre is compared to the many others in horror that demean women and show their worst experiences for the pure discomfort of their audience.

When women and femininity are constantly devalued within media, cannibalism enables women to gain power, in addition to the consequences or shame they face when doing so.

These films also show the struggles of coming of age as a woman, such as *Raw*'s theme of Justine experiencing becoming an adult in college and navigating her sexuality, or *Jennifer's Body*'s main topic of the sexualization of young women and becoming empowered after an assault.

While many pieces of media attempt to tackle the themes of misogyny and sexualization, cannibalism can show the bloody and painful parts of being a woman not many other metaphors can.

References

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EAT YOUR HEART



VICTIMS

1980's Lingerie ---- Clover
Carnival Killer ----- Dani
Ripley look-alike - Eleanor
Sunday Best ----- Sol
Baseball cap in Pearls
----- Max

Bloody Glasses -----
----- Via
Green Haired Country
Girl -----
Rebecca

Divine Flesh
Photoshoot
by
Alexa Cruz Abarca

Collage
Arrangements
by
Rebecca
Kartchner



BUSH OR NO BUSH

PROS

opinions from the collective

PROS

- Looks cute
- Can twirl in your fingers
- Keeps you warm down there
- Fun to shave into shapes
- Low maintenance
- All natural baybeeeee
- Hoes love it
- Excellent for teaching anatomy
- Gender euphoria
- Can dye fun colors

- Looks cute
- Smooth
- Easier to see if you have STDs
- You can pretend to be a shark
- No velcro action if ur partner has a beard
- Aerodynamic
- Hoes love it
- Excellent for teaching anatomy
- Gender euphoria
- Tattoos?

CONS

- Pokes through panties
- Gets stuck in zippers
- Itchy
- Can find strays in mouth post coitus
- Clumps up if u get a period
- Turns straight sometimes (could b pro?)
- Hard to braid
- Can be overstimulating
- Hurts when it gets too long

CONS

- Gets prickly fast
- Ingrown hairs :(
- Itchy
- Can't braid or twirl
- Clammy at times
- Sometimes looks prepubescent (turn off!)
- Looks like meat? (could be a pro?)
- Plain
- Bush is life!!

By Mush

CRAZY, CRUNCHY VESSELS

June 7, 2025

Written by Robin Bailey

You are sitting at a table
feet firmly planted on
the grave of the
Mother Pioneer
amidst a million happy faces
wondering why you aren't
working this event.

You should be out of your
chair, camera-in-hand,
hunched over, squinting,
browbeat by sun, sweat,
observing this scene which
you should not take part in
because you are objective:
That is, you are the objectified;
you are the real starving artist
you are the one on the edge of
all struggle, all liberation, all love
because you are not here to be
part of it. You are not here to be
one of them.

They want you there because you
have made yourself of use, insofar
that you keep to the sideline, that
you watch your step and your mouth,
that you bridge the gap between two
frayed glorified friend groups, that you
make & produce something incredible
and push its deadline indefinitely to
make room for the
"more important work."

(Being there, for them).

This deadline is not just
your newspaper.
It is you,
living your life.

crazy
crunchy
vessels
by mason

You are on hiatus, yes, at the whims
of every media-illiterate around you,
no matter how many pain-staking
seconds or minutes or hours you
attempt skillsharing. But also you
are this saint at the mercy
of an infinitely fallible
group / circle / party
that does not, did not
want you here.

And in a year you've thought
you spent proving your worth,
you've instead, more or less,
wasted it
proving this point:

They cannot love you
in a way that matters more
than you loving yourself.

smoking makes your heart pure by alexa cruz abarca



Don't Worry

Written by Kylan Man
Collage by Rebecca
Kartchner
Corset by Danny
Doodles Partying by
Moun

You ever hear skin stretch? Not like a cut or scrape — I mean real, thick, human skin. The kind that takes effort. It sticks. It resists. But when it gives... it sounds like wet paper ripping. I still hear it sometimes, even when I'm alone. Especially when I'm alone.

I was sixteen when I left

Eugene, Oregon. Nobody noticed. Not the neighbors. Not the teachers. Not my dad. Especially not him.

He used to drink until his face turned purple and the bottle was warm in his hands. He'd call me names that didn't make sense and hit like he wanted to erase me. I think he was trying to. And maybe, back then, I wanted him to succeed.

So I left. I stole 83 bucks from his wallet and a half-rotten hoodie from the Goodwill bin. I slept behind a Safeway. I ate gas station sandwiches. I'd sit in the park and smile at strangers just to feel human. People mostly ignored me.

Except them.

The kids who thought they were better. The ones with vape pens and fake Gucci belts. The ones who laughed when I asked for change. One of them — Devin — liked to follow me around. He'd call me "trashboy" and throw pennies at me like I was some homeless wishing well.

I tried to be good. I always tried to be good. But kindness is wasted on wolves.



found me near the river trail. I'd built a little camp out of tarp and wood scraps. It was the only place that felt like mine.

They kicked it down. They beat me until I bled from the mouth. Devin spit in my face and said, "Go crawl back to your rat hole, freak."

Something in me broke that night.

I followed him. For days. I learned his schedule. I saw how fake he was — hugging his mom, smiling in church. I waited. I watched. And when he walked home alone down 6th Avenue, headphones in, hoodie up...

I struck.

I didn't even plan the rest. I didn't know it would be like that. The blood. The twitching. The warmth. It was like peeling away the lie — and underneath it was peace. It took hours. I don't know how I had the strength. But I did it. I peeled him like fruit.

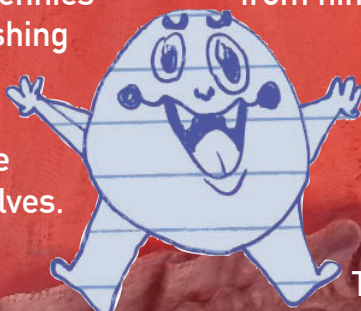
Then I put it on.

The skin was tight, sticky. But once it was on, it fit. I was Devin. I was the golden boy. People looked at me differently. They didn't flinch. They smiled.

I've been practicing his voice. I'm getting better at the walk. Soon, I'll go home to his family. I'll sit at his dinner table, sleep in his bed, live his life.

He took everything from me. So now I'll take it from him — from inside.

And if anyone tries to stop me... Well. I've learned how to make more room under the skin.



21 One night, he and his friends

They think I'm Devin.

His mom cried when she saw me. She threw her arms around me like I was her own flesh and blood. I guess, technically, I was.

Funny thing about skin — it's convincing. You wear it right, walk the way they remember, and people want to believe. They fill in the gaps. It's easier than asking questions.



I've been living here for weeks.

At first, it was... itchy. It didn't quite fit. But after a few days, it stretched into place like it wanted me inside. My voice was the hardest part — that boyish lilt Devin had. I practiced in the mirror, lips moving like a puppet's. Eventually, I could say things like:

off but...I knew she would become a problem.

"You know Macy, funny little thing about skin, it doesn't tear, it stretches. But the person inside can tear like a wet piece of paper. I mean, at least Devin did."

She tried to scream, but the sound never left her mouth. I stabbed her with a pencil in the neck and tore at her skin....By morning, she was a pile of flesh and bones left out the window. By the time they found her flesh, the skin was part of me.

“Love you, Mom.”

"I'm fine, just tired."

"No, I haven't seen Trashboy lately."

They bought every word.

All except her. His little sister.

Macy.

Seven years old, crooked teeth, always watching. She didn't say much at first. Just stared. Stared too long. And one night, she said:

"You don't blink like Devin."

That made my smile twitch. I tried to laugh it



The Hearth

Written by Liz
Elytra

Illustrations by
Ellie Urbancic
Collage by Robin
Bailey

The alarm clock starts playing a nostalgic tune from Homeworld1. It's quiet but gets progressively louder as I roll over in my bed, trying to find the mechanism to turn it off. My curled fingers bump into the button set into the wall near my bed, and I press firmly to let the alarm know I am awake. This action signals the dim lamps to pulse on. It is early, but I need the extra time to get ready for my guest this afternoon. I don't really know anything about them. The official report mentioned nothing of importance; it simply listed their name, title, and a professional company headshot. Ambassador of Colonial Affairs, Alexander Johnson, will finish their 107-year journey in approximately 4 hours, and the anticipation of their arrival has kept me from getting a full night's sleep. There is much to prepare for this historic day, our first planetary evaluation since colonization. I jump out of bed and head straight to the food quarters. My bedfellow is already (or maybe still) up working on a new painting, surrounded by three others that sit unfinished. "You are a delight to feast my eyes on first thing, Cameron." She looks up, startled from her concentration, and delivers a smile that creates crinkles in the corners of her eyes. "I see and warmly welcome your presence, Avery." At the sink, I fill two cups with water, place them in a drink carrier, and hook my forearms under the carrier before joining her at the table. I have to use both fists to set a cup in front of her, and Cameron patiently waits for me to finish my task before delivering a kiss. I sit down with my own cup and take a look at her new painting. It strikes me as a surrealist self-portrait; the subject's body is twig-like in some parts and cloud-like in other parts. The head is an iridescent green/purple pigeon, and the body features resemble Cameron's own long left leg and short right leg. As I examine her art, Cameron brings the foot of her short leg up to the edge of the heavy, handcrafted wooden table and pushes her rolling chair back in one fluid motion, propelling herself to the counter. I look up in time to see her grab one of my straws from the sanitation rack and scoot back my way to drop it in my cup with a wink. I return an appreciative smile and take several gulps of water, not breaking eye contact. After the last mouthful of my drink, I give a suggestive slow lick up the straw. Feeling for her foot under the table with mine, I softly move up her long leg to her thigh, and begin playing with the hem of her paint apron. Cameron gives me a look I know well. "Are you starting something you don't have the time to finish?" Looking around the room at the unfinished paintings, I let out an involuntary titter. Cameron follows my gaze, "That's not the same thing, and you know it." She leans over and pulls my face to hers with a gentle force and kisses me for a full minute. "Let us revisit this thought if you have energy after your big day. Go get dressed, and I'll check if our first-meal box has been delivered."

Satiated and dressed in cozy pastel layers, I head to the shuttle landing.

23 The morning is now moderately bright but still brisk with night-time air. It takes me 8 minutes to get to my destination on foot.

I arrive just as the spacecraft is landing, so I take a seat on one of the covered benches. For the third time since leaving my home, I anxiously scanned the contents of my pockets: communications device, digital notepad, and my medical ID card in my jacket pockets. Earplugs, snack, and my coin bag in the pockets of my pale blue cargo pants. In addition to my usual accoutrements, I also brought eye protection for the Ambassador, who may have been as poorly debriefed on this planet's

conditions as I was on the Ambassador's access needs.

Sure enough, the Ambassador of Colonial Affairs came out of the shuttle squinting and shielding their eyes. As I approached, they held out their hand for a shake, and I gave them a greeting fistbump.

"That's not a very professional way to address an..."

The Ambassador trailed off as they stared uncomfortably long at my hands that didn't unclench. I quickly moved on to save them from their faux pas.

"Good morning, Ambassador Alexander Johnson. My name is Avery, and I use they/them pronouns. I have been appointed as your cultural emissary and tour guide for your first day here on Colony-16. How would you like to be addressed?"

I smiled and took a breath, leaving room for the Ambassador to speak, but they stayed silent. I worked the digital notepad out of my pocket and used a combination of my mouth and wrists to flip open the protective case before continuing,

"We typically go by first names here. If you would like to conform to our way, this is what I would suggest."

"I see, in that case, I am Alex... I use he/him pronouns?"

I give him an affirmative nod and take a quick note using my own personalized Morse code by tapping on the screen with the knuckle of my pinky finger.

"I brought you eye protection; the sun on C-16 is brighter than on Homeworld1. Please feel comfortable to take them from my jacket collar if you would like them."

I gesture to where I have sunglasses hooked. He looks uncomfortably at my neckline and politely declines.

"No, thank you, I'm fine. I'm sure I will acclimate."

"I respect your decision. On this planet, very few people go without any eye protection, and those who do usually experience vision loss within a couple of years. I do not condemn your choice; I simply wish to ensure you are making an informed choice."

Alex hesitates for a moment, then reaches out for the sunglasses and puts them on. He visibly relaxes, looks around, and for the first time, he meets my eyes, seeming to really take me in. Feeling a sudden wave of self-awareness that I had not experienced since puberty, I fumbled with my words,

"How... did you experience your travels?"

It's a nonsensical question; we both knew full well that he would not have remembered any of it, and the flush from my neck reached the top of my ears. He surprises me by answering my question candidly, "Well, even though I have light-traveled a dozen times, it still scares me every time. I go into stasis full of anxiety and wake up panting as if I have just run a marathon."

I stare, reassessing what I perceived previously as curt behavior.

"That sounds challenging. You are courageous for continuing to do this



work. This gives me an idea for where I would like to start our tour."

I lead Alex to the closest transportation bay, which is easily distinguished from other buildings by its transparent walls and the large "T" transportation logo displayed on its sides.

"What good fortune!"

I exclaimed as we entered the large open bay doors, "There are multiple models to choose from at this bay; the cabdrivers must have recently restocked. Would you prefer a sitting or standing model?"

When he did not immediately answer, I looked around to see Alex walking between rows of motor vehicles, taking notes on a tablet he produced from his satchel. Each scooter is uniquely decorated and distinct.

"Which one is yours?"

He asked.

"None of them, we use them and then park them at one of the many transportation bays around the city."

He continues to walk through the long aisles of transportation units, stops at one, and, with a look of surprise, he points, "This one has a penis on it."

I come around to stand next to him, and sure enough, taking up the entire door, a nude pin-up of a hairy guy who has dropped his prosthetic leg, is bent over at the waist with a classic wide-eyed "oops" face. I recognize it as Cameron's art and smile.

"What if a young child sees this? How do you explain seeing a penis or a person without their leg?"

I consider their question,

"We have archives of art from Homeworld1 that depict nudity as homogeneous bodies. Our planet's art depicts bodies more like those we are likely to encounter, and they are an essential part of our experience. Additionally, at every school level, we are taught bodily autonomy, anatomy, and sexuality. Since everyone on this planet has diverse needs, these conversations are an expected part of getting to know someone. I suppose what I am saying is that bodies are celebrated, yet at the same time, they are just bodies."

I press a quick-release touch sensor with the back of my hand, which opens the passenger door for Alex, who cautiously steps into the two-person standing vehicle. I go around to the other side and let myself in. Once comfortably situated inside, I call the computer's attention, request the self-driving function, and direct the GPS to "The Hearth." Upon confirmation of the route, the unit silently starts up, and we exit the bay.

"What is the fuel source for the scooters?"

"We have improved on the source material from Homeworld1 to be an almost entirely solar-powered society. We are committed to environmentally harmonious practices."

Scooting through the city, we make several short stops as Alex takes notes dictating to his tablet. He talks about the slowness of vehicles, the narrow streets, and the wide, well-maintained walkways. He touches on quickly identifiable buildings with markings indicating bathrooms, restaurants, shops, and libraries. He talks at great length about the greenery that is everywhere — native plants in hanging baskets, under windows, inside buildings — but never obstructing footpaths. Most distinctly, he observes that people are everywhere. Children are playing, people are sitting on covered benches, enjoying a late breakfast, and kissing over first-meal. "It is late in the morning, why are there so many people..."

Alex struggles to find the words.

"We have found that we can balance work and life enjoyment much more when we can set our own schedules, communicate our projected capabilities, and leave room for rest."

Alex looked at me skeptically, but again stayed silent.

"I understand where your suspicions come from, Alex. My

research on Homeworld1 indicates that work is the means for capital. We earn coin, but we don't rely on it for our survival, and the work we do is meaningful to us.

It has immediate benefits to our and others' lives, which makes a big difference in the way we feel about work." He nods slowly.

"We will be approaching our destination shortly. Let's take a break there so you can catch up on notes and ask any questions."

The vehicle pulls up to a tall building with decorative eaves that cast curvy, provocative shadows. Surrounding the building is lush greenery that

provides shade, along with several tables and chairs. A large, hand-carved sign in front of the building reads: Honeysuckle Hearth. Alex looks stunned for a moment before exclaiming,

"This building looks like it could be an incredibly wealthy person's mansion. What is this place?"

"I have two things to address from your question, Alex. First, we do not value hoarding wealth as great wealth comes from exploitation, not personal effort. Housing accommodations are based solely on an individual's needs and desires for their dwelling; anyone can live in such a place. Second..."

I say, taking a step back with pride on my face,

"This is Honeysuckle Hearth, pleasure house and spa."

There is a brief pause, then Alex bursts out in laughter.

"That was not the reaction I was expecting, Alex, but I am so pleased to witness your joy. The Hearth is a sensory-friendly space. I thought it would be a good place to regulate your nervous system after your experience with light-travel."

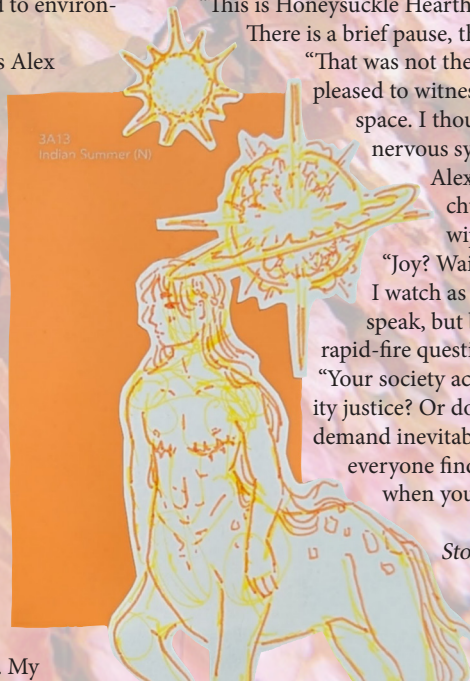
Alex's deep belly laugh turned into a labored chuckle as he briefly removed his sunglasses to wipe moisture from his eyes.

"Joy? Wait, you are not serious, are you?"

I watch as his face sobers up. I open my mouth to speak, but before I could reply, he asks several more rapid-fire questions.

"Your society actually condones sex work? Why? For disability justice? Or do you exploit your women? Catering to this demand inevitably leads to trafficking! I thought you said everyone finds value in their work. How can that be so when you have women selling their bodies?"

Story continued online.





You Are A Dorm In The Summer

Written by Via Nelson, collage by Rebecca Kartchner

A breeze unlatched a door down the hall from mine,
 once a respite from the contention at home,
 now a soulless remainder;
 vacated with a window left open.
 I wandered naively forward to investigate the draft,
 pulled in closer by adoration,
 sweet and deceitful.
 Now at the entrance of this temporary shelter,
 the once gentle air began to force me out,
 still I pressed my way in.
 Witnessing the center of you;
 flat bloodless walls,
 silent pulseless sink,
 25 pale-skinned ceiling,

an empty ribcage.

In your center on my knees I begged to keep crumbs,
 combing my fingers through the carpet,
 landing upon a red barrette,
 seizing it immediately so as to savor you.
 I felt its smoothness lay beneath my fingers,
 remembering your skin,
 my hands along the place where your spine should be.
 Holding on longer to you,
 until the last color wore off,
 the final gasping embers of an old flame getting snuffed.
 Looking outside the reckless window,
 down in the dirt,
 the slowly rotting apple,
 that you once held in your hands and ate from.



My Luella

*Written by Marceline
Illustration and Photography by
Alex(a) Cruz Abarca*

Her skin is icy cold to the touch and her lips are tinged with a light shade of blue. The warm lips I once partook in, that marked upon my every being, are changed. She leaves me here, bruised and battered from her absence. The once-green eyes gaze into my soul, yet she isn't looking at me; her eyes have a sort of film over them. She is faded...almost. Gone. And I am to prepare her body, as I've done to so many corpses before, but this is much different. She is mine. My Luella.

My duty is to drain the fluids from the corpse's veins and pump them anew with arsenic and liquor. I sew their pieces back together, then I bathe and dress them to be viewed. I never thought my beautiful Luella would be one of the bodies lying on my chilled table. But here she sits, rotting before my eyes, nature breaking her down. Her honey-suckle perfume and rot sit heavy in the air, creating a heavy weight on my chest.

My Luella is delicately placed on a table of ice, which stops the decomposition that would've further taken her appearance. Her body could've been a mere feast for maggots wriggling and burrowing under her skin, rotting her and creating a putrid smell wafting around the room. Yet, she smells of nothing but perfume and a light pungent scent reminding me slightly of mold. I still feel heavy. Her arms, her waist, her thighs, and her face that I love. My breathtaking angel, the

only one who truly knew me. Oh, how I ache for her.

As I stroke her face, I can still feel the soft hairs above her lips and on her cheeks where yellowed and bruised flesh covered in leaking bumps now sit. I find that the clear fluid is oddly thick as I swipe some away with my bare fingertip. All warmth has left her; she is frozen in time as it continues for me. My heart pangs ever so painfully. I lean over her, wrapping her hand in mine, and whisper, "My eternal love, you will always be mine." When I place a kiss on her forehead, I feel nothing but a vile chill of ice beneath my lips, resulting in a shiver sent down my spine.

Luella doesn't look quite like the beautiful woman I knew, I find a new beauty underneath all the rot. Consumption, we all know what it looks like now. An awful ailment it is, she had a neverending cough for months prior to leaving what we had built together. Her nails are brittle, thin, and tinged purple; they appear to be easily broken with a snap, but the same engraved silver ring I gave her sits on her finger. Her eyes used to match the vines and leaves that violently overtook our garden in a plague of sorts. Now they appear bluer, darker, and are covered in a washed-out film. She can't truly look anywhere, especially at me, but I find that her soft gaze follows me. Luella's skin on her face, breasts, arms, and legs are covered in small patches of purple and yellow bumps, dripping that same thick, clear pus. Light gray scars in the same round shapes littered other parts of her body. Despite the illness and decay, my Luella was as beautiful as ever. I trace over every part I used to. I still press her lips into mine, yet she doesn't push back. Instead, I feel the soft bumps surrounding her cold mouth. She is but a corpse. I yearn for the feeling of my Luella pressing back into me. My lipstick is visible on her soft lips, a light red smudge now surrounding her mouth.

My chest tightens as I attach the pipe to a large, clear jar used to catch her fluids. The pain further dawns on me as I pick up my scalpel and slice through the vein underneath Luella's collarbone, immediately oozing a stream of thick, dark blood; my Luella is gone. She will never come back. I feel a pulsing pain consume my every vein, lighting my body on fire. It burns me for my sins. I'm forced to use my weight to jam the pipe through the bleeding slit and into Luella's vein. After I succeed, I stroke her curly, brittle hair and watch the blood bead around her wound then begin to drain through the pipe. I am curious to find that I have butterflies flapping throughout my stomach. Are they anxiety, or, worse, excitement? What is this feeling that ravages me?

The jar splashes and fills as I manually pump the machine, squeeze by squeeze, over and over again. My hands dully ache and quiver with every squeeze of the handle pushing more and more blood out of my lover. I squeeze again. And again. And again. My shoulder cramps. All of my being shakes. I feel as if none of the world is still. I can feel my body buzzing and singing. A new form of life is bouncing throughout my throat. As I see the bright red, chunky fluid plop and pour faster into the jar, my throat loses all moisture. It looks lively, cleansing, even. Today, I learn what dehydration truly is. The parchment of an empty throat. A quenching urge. I know what I must do. I don't desire it, though. Do I? How could I? I love her, therefore I couldn't.

I stare down at her. "Luella...so pretty, even in death. I could eat you whole," I mutter to the air, forgotten ever so quickly. I dread the thought of anyone knowing of my sinful desire for Luella. How I miss Luella seeing me too. I ache for the feeling of her warm lips against mine. A single kiss from her would bless and cleanse me of all sins. A sole touch would heal me of all ailments. A lone night with her would permit me to reach heaven over and over again. I yearn for her soft voice flowing into my ears, telling me she's mine. But how could I have her? I need her so, I bleed for her. My Luella yearns for me too. I want to devour her as I once did.

The blood begins to slow. Drip. Drip. Drip. It fills the jar with my lover's fluid, her veins are drained empty as my throat is so incredibly dry. A thirst I've never felt before this day. A thought consumes my soul. I mustn't. So I stroke her hair, a few strands breaking

between my fingers with a violent snap, and think of her being that swallowed me whole.

I feel empty without her, but I continue. I close the jar of her blood, replacing it with the jar of embalming fluid. I begin to pump the mixture of arsenic and liquor back into her, stuffing her body with waste. It takes a pang of adrenaline to power each squeeze. My hand aches as does my chest, taking over my ribs in a sharp sting focused toward my heart. The pain is a dreaded reminder of her. When I finish the vile pushing, a red, inflamed section marks my hand from where the handpump sat. I ache so very badly. My delicate Luella is now but a memory, an empty corpse lies in front of me. I hate the urge that devours my heart.

I should not get hungry at my occupation, the seeping fluids and stomach-churning smells, the maggots that crawl between organs and burrow under their skin, leaving eggs and husks between veins and skin, the putrid smells that leak on my clothes and linger in my hair for days. Yet, while working on Luella, I am. I am so very famished and so very fearful of the urge that swallows me whole. Humans could be so beautiful, especially my Luella. For why does my Luella look so delicious? For why is my throat so dry and my heart aching like never before?

I glance at the jar. Luella's faded eyes gaze upon me softly, watching me as she used to, a sort of permission. My mouth drips with saliva, a small stream of drool drips to the floor with a small splash and creates a clear puddle. I am utterly parched. I need it. I must be blessed. I unscrew the lid, a metallic smell quickly flows into my nose and lights my body. A surge of energy shoots through me and causes my fingertips to tingle. Do I?

I must.

I begin to chug, violently gulping down Luella's life force. I can feel my throat struggling to keep up as I must focus on breathing through the sinful act that suffocates me. The heavy fluid tastes sweet and metallic and excites me so very much. She is my religion. The thought of Luella wrecks my heart. She leaves me with a hole in my soul no other being could fill. My love for her was all-consuming. Her love for me consumed her as she withered away. I must fill myself somehow. An overwhelming pleasure grips me as her blood flows into my mouth and dances on my tastebuds. I gorge on the heavenly feast that is Luella, she is mine, filling me slowly. The chunks I come across are meaningless, I chew and swallow all the same. Any gagging is quickly swallowed away with more blood, even as tears fill my eyes and seep onto my shirt, mixing with the blood dribbling from my mouth. A raging flame lights me.

The godly taste compels me to continue, even as the blood pours down my chin and soaks my shirt in an awfully damp feeling colder than Luella. It leaks down my chest, chilling my nipples, and spatters on the floor. It tickles my skin in various places as it slides down slowly, I enjoy every second. The wetness is cold and makes me shiver, but the urges are as all-consuming as my love. Luella took me wholly, just as I take her now. I gag and choke and savor every second of the desperate gulping and thick, metallic taste. My throat tingles as chunks slide down it and pool in my stomach. I always knew Luella was sweet from the inside out, I love her taste. I devour every clot and feel it gush, blood exploding between my teeth. My mouth is filled with glory. As the jar finally empties, I continue to satiate every drop. I shove my hand in the jar to lap the final drops of my Luella, licking the last red stains on my fingers. Her taste is heavy on my tongue and overwhelms my mouth. It covers my chin and drips down my chest. She lingers on my teeth and breath. The reminder of her is so delicious. It powers me and causes a throbbing pulse throughout my core. It's not enough. I am the only one to devour my Luella, the only one who knows her being. She is mine, I am hers.

As I remain damp with her blood, I return to my Luella's corpse and find her soft eyes meeting mine. She does not look at me with anger,

27 but rather love, as it always was. My love is now a corpse filled with poison, and I am engorged with her blood.

But the hunger is not yet satiated. It still rises like bile in my throat, stinging at the back and causing my eyes to well with tears. I glance at her lower stomach. I don't care for the consequences, for she is a glorious sin worth the sacrifice. My mouth fills with saliva yet again. I must. I know I must, my Luella knows too.

Before I can think further, I've lost control and feel myself ripping into her like a starved animal. I'm biting and scratching at her, surprised by the sharpness and strength of my teeth and nails. Her flesh squishes and stretches under me. It's tough as I chew and gnash the protein creating a thick, wet, fleshy slurry in my mouth. She lights me whole, my stomach flipping and throbbing. It takes effort to swallow, but god, is it worth it. She is so incredibly delicious, tasting of rum, vanilla, and uncooked pork. She is mine, filling my stomach and lighting my loins in a thrill I'll never feel again. My heart still burns, but her cold, leathery flesh fills me wholly.

I further claw and tear at her pale skin, wet slurping and smacking noises echoing off the walls of the cluttered room. I rip the skin with my teeth, leaving bite marks and bruises on her. The pus-filled bumps dance on my tongue as I drag it across the bumpy texture, a slightly sour taste filling my mouth and filling me with joy. I can smell the alcoholic, floral hints as I taste her. I am utterly obsessed with her. I feel drunk off of her. Loving Luella was always a mere sin, but it remained my favorite one, at that. This hunger that pains me can only be satiated by her. Luella, Luella, Luella. She plagues my every thought. It's easier than I had imagined to bite through human skin. The leathery flesh is tough and chilled, but my teeth progressively rip through it easier and easier as I devour more and more of my Luella. My jaw aches from the constant chewing and pulling of her wet, stringy flesh. I am soaked from her fluids. I feel a burn overtaking my throat as I choke her down. My vision is fuzzy and I can feel my body swaying back and forth, I ride the high of my love for her. I snarl and growl as my teeth rip through Luella's skin, clear fluid popping in my mouth from one of the many bumps. It floods my mouth with a sour taste and leaks from my lips, dripping slowly onto her skin. Her skin grinds between my teeth, squelching and squeaking as I suffocate until it slides down my throat at last. My mouth is filled with thin saliva that drips onto the ground between my love and I. I am drawn back, looking up to her face and over her being as my mouth hangs slightly agape.

I observe the large wound on my Luella. A large chunk of the skin located on her lower abdomen and right hip are missing. A gash fills the space, revealing her dulled insides and a peak of her hip bone underneath. I can see every layer of her skin. My dear is beautiful. I am satiated by my Luella, as I always have been. My hunger for Luella compares to no one else. I am covered in her fluids and consumed by her. Luella, Luella, Luella. It was finally enough. Though she is gone, she is here, within me.

I thread the sewing needle, being cautious not to poke myself, then begin sewing her skin. Though she is tinged blue and cold to the touch, I love her despite her rot. I trace over the remaining pus-filled bumps that cover patches of her soft skin, licking the pus from my finger after. I smile, the threaded needle pushes and stabs through her frigid skin, attaching it with a slight bit of arsenic leaking out between each push. I focus on it, obsess over how her skin looks and feels. One of my favorite things about Luella was always how soft she was. I loved to caress every inch of her and grasp her as she held me. I wanted to devour her then, too. Luella always made sinning feel blissful. I can see the blonde peach fuzz move under my fingers as I glide them over her skin.

I'm finally pulled out of the trance Luella leaves me in when I prick my finger accidentally, with a slight gasp escaping me as a painful sting shoots up my arm, my blood then leaking onto Luella's skin. Yet I continue to sew, smearing light dots of my blood across her right hip and breasts as I trace over them. I place a large piece of cloth over the remains of my divine feast. I focus on each smaller wound, making it just enough to put my Luella together. I can use her clothing

to cover much of my doing. I must make her look as if she had never died, as if I had never chugged and gagged on every drop of her blood and devoured her flesh in a beautiful, carnal feast. I feel sick.

What have I done? I am a mere sinner, rotten to the core like Luella's corpse. Though I tasted her rot, I love her all the same. Luella loved me despite my sour core and tainted soul. For what will I do without my Luella? I needed her. I consumed her, as did that awful disease, and I feel satiated. Does the plague, too, feel full? Was it as ravaged as I before taking her? Does it feel the same tingling satisfaction after devouring all she once was? I loved her, though. Are love and consumption one in the same? Luella consumed me wholly, in and out. She bled me out and wrang me dry. I was Luella's spinning, dizzy mess, entranced by her. I beg for her, plead on my knees, scream for what we call God. I would do whatever her word says I must. I'd sin for her, commit blasphemy for her. I am only hers. I need her. Do I feel filled enough? Will I ever feel filled again without her?

Despite my sins, though, Luella's corpse still looks at me with love, her Belladonna. Luella wanted me too. Luella understood me like no one else, it's why I loved her so. Her body is still beautiful, still purer than I. As I observe her, I notice that Luella would not desire the patches of blood on her, so I wet a rag and begin to lightly scrub her reddened skin, a slight nausea flooding my stomach. The skin over her breasts is covered in small spatters of my blood and dark beads around the vein I sliced into. I am delicate with her, as I was before she was a corpse. I am not ready to part ways with my Luella yet, but my job is soon finished. She is colder than ever, the ice underneath her doing its purpose and slowly melting over time. I peck her forehead, feeling the same bumps graze my lips lightly. As I lay my head on her bare chest, my hair draping over her, I imagine how it felt when she was alive. She was so lively, she reminded me of the sun. It didn't matter where we were, she was the prettiest sight. Luella's hair used to be softer, her skin smoother and warmer, her laugh lighting the stars. Her cheeks were always dashed with a tinge of pink, and the way she gripped me brought me to life and left me dazed. I would listen to her heartbeat as I laid on her chest often, the pulsing rhythm brought me great comfort. Everything about her made me tingle with excitement. All was well before the consumption started. Though the burning in the back of my throat never left, it worsens now.

Luella, Luella, Luella. I wish my darling didn't consume me so. I need her. I miss her metallic taste in my mouth, spurling and melting between my teeth. I miss her love devouring me. I stand covered in her blood, a lasting memory choked down. I must finish the last steps. I struggle a bit to gently pick her up, yet I used to do it easily. I place her on another table of ice with an exasperated sigh then drape her clothing and jewelry I had set aside over my arm. The silk is smooth and looks luxurious as I dress her body in a blue dress with white lacy trim. It further brings out the blue hue over her skin, but it was my Luella's favorite. Her faded eyes remain open, watching me from somewhere. I hold her head up as I drape her cherished pearl rosary around it, placing the cross perfectly between her breasts. She does not look as she did when she was alive, it could never look the same.

A sudden pang of pain that rots me to my core. A sharp stab in my stomach feels as though a maggot is wriggling through my skin. A burning nausea fills me whole, stomach acid lighting the back of my throat. I was delusional. The taste of flesh could never replace the sound of her laugh, how my stomach flipped and spun with her gaze upon me. Her blood didn't taste as sweet as her tongue dancing throughout my mouth as she explored my inner being. My Luella was more than a glorious feast, she was my love. I must admit it now, her corpse was not the same, the rot changed her. I changed her. The white veil I drape over her casket can't hide the oozing bumps or her washed-over eyes. Her consuming love marked upon my soul, never leaving me. My Luella, as I knew her, is gone. She is but an embalmed corpse, by my doing.

My abdomen hurts ever so painfully. Watery saliva fills my

mouth no matter how many times I attempt to swallow it away.

I curl over and begin to cough and violently dry heave. I am plagued with pain. What if her plague was a punishment for our sins? What if this is a punishment for mine? I am finally forced to empty the contents of my stomach, a mixture of blood and stomach acid with chunks of Luella's flesh. It leaves a sour, alcoholic aftertaste in my mouth. My sin is expelled from within, leaving me with a fiery burn ripping through me like hellfire. I dread the thought that I may finally be made to pay for my blasphemous crimes. I feel a slight choke as my heart throbs with the emptiness of losing her. My stomach prongs and aches as I hunch over myself.

Why must it hurt so bad? I cannot bear to be reminded of Luella much longer. I can hear the rhythmic pulsing calling me as my vision slowly goes in and out. It blurs, then fills with static, and my head hangs oh-so heavy on my neck. The pulsing reminds me of Luella's soothing heartbeat. The emptiness desires me, just as I desire it. It feels comfortable, like home, like Luella. Breathing is becoming more and more difficult, and I find myself battling for my ribs to expand in labored breaths. I hear a high-pitched wheeze escape my throat whenever I breathe in, disturbing me greatly. It sounds of a light scream echoing from my lungs, pleading for air. It rattles and gurgles when I exhale, more fluid filling the back of my throat as I attempt to breathe more. Was this what Luella's last moments were like? Last months? Luella ravages my heart and burns through my core. Her perfect face haunts me. Her love plagues me. The sound of her laugh bellows through my ears and echoes in my soul, ruining me. I am a sinner. I am rotten. Nothing but maggots and flies and dirt. I should be where Luella is, it should've been me.

I feel a warmth buzz through my being, I am hotter than I've ever felt before. My hands are clammy and shake as I try to bring them to my face. A memory of my lover caressing my arm as she holds me burns through my core. Though I fight to continue standing, to hold Luella's hand one last time, I stumble and end up lying on the cold floor. A rancid smell surrounds the room as I lie next to my vomit and spatters of mine and Luella's blood. The chilled floor and wetness are a nice contrast to my now hellishly hot body. I feel Luella's presence warming my soul.

I think of her as I close my eyes, a sour, firey taste bubbling up through my throat and further laboring my shaky breathing. I am gasping and struggling to consume any air, it denies me any relief. I can feel bubbly fluid fill my throat as I try to cough, but it only spills from my mouth and onto my chin. I can hear a gurgling escape my throat between the ringing in my ears. Even as I grab at my head and attempt to sit up, it doesn't stop. None of it stops. My love for Luella poisons me, a proper punishment for my sins.

Though I can still feel myself choking and gurgling, I am now so very calm, the calmest I've been since she left. An ocean of relief overtakes my body as all the pain vanishes, it is nothing but numbness and tranquility. I don't fight my loss of breath or the fading of my vision. Instead, I think of how my name sounded in her voice. I think of her soft, blonde hair and the dimples that showed as she laughed. The pain of losing her hurt the most out of everything. My Luella rots me from the inside out and into something new. It will all be the same again, soon. I will feel her warmth again despite my sins. I obey her, I'd follow her anywhere.

Oh, my dearest Luella, how I loved you so.



Midsummer Shadow

Written by Dorian Blue

"Lovers" illustrated by Ellie Urbancic, Background by Raven Tigerlily

Tuscan Countryside, 1347

The sound of laughter and clinking glasses wafted through the open windows. The four stood outside in one of the many gardens, amidst the overgrown shrubbery. Their many nights of watching and waiting were coming to an end. Seven women and five men were inside the manor. They were all nobles in the throes of youth, along with a few servants. They were well off enough to have a country estate to flee to, getting away from the deadly close quarters of the city. Sheltered from those horrors together, they picked up a lifestyle of utter debauchery. Endless food, drink, and revelry. They all cavorted with each other, exploring previously unknown pleasures and sensations. The nobles' flesh was untouched by the puss-filled boils and fatal fever that terrorized the population across the continent, staying supple and young. The group was in something close to Eden, rambling gardens and trees filling in every contour of the country property.

Little did they know that every foible and weakness in their minds were being examined. It was entertaining to watch them from the shadows, but that wasn't why they were there. Four blood drinkers, long deprived of fresh blood in any quantity, had encountered a rare opportunity and they all intended to not waste a drop of it. Grigori, the youngest of the four, paid close attention to one of the men. His face was flushed from wine, sweat dripping down his neck. Grigori had a youthful appearance too, a remnant of the age he was turned.

He leaned forward, mouth hanging open as he focused on the man inside. Adil, the oldest, yanked him back.

"Not yet," he whispered, chuckling under his breath. He found Grigori's raw craving endearing.

Grigori groaned, pushing away from Adil's tall frame. "I've waited long enough."

"Quiet," Hal hissed, her dark hair falling over her eyes. Grigori was a troublesome sibling to her, and she often found cause to reprimand him.

Grigori rolled his eyes, but said nothing.

They all felt the same way as him, but coped with it far better. They had no choice; they couldn't change their bleak surroundings, only survive them. Together it was easier, but it made their hunger even more intense. Still, they all preferred getting on each other's nerves than weathering the devastation all alone. The manor full of nobles was their boon. Their bottomless hunger would finally be sated by good blood. The relief and pleasure that awaited them was too great to even imagine.

A cheer went up inside, the young man strumming a note on his lute. One of the ladies, blonde hair streaming down her shoulders, began singing. Her voice was light and silky. The duo's shared lust buzzed through the air. They were like flower blooms moist from a summer rain, trembling and in ecstasy. The others were splayed on the sofas and cushions around the room, cups of wine in

29 hand, all in various states of intoxication.

As the vampires laid in wait, they struggled to choose

the right time to strike. How fast would they scatter when they realized death had come for them? They knew the nobles' personalities, entanglements, routines, and grudges, mapping their path forward.

"Shall we?" Wolf, the final member of their quartet, said. Her blonde hair was thrown over her shoulder in a braid. She preferred to dress as a man for ease and comfort.

"If we're ready," Hal said, looping her arm around Wolf's.

Wolf kissed Hal's hand, gazing at the men, who also stood ready.

In the youths' recklessness, all the side doors of the house were unlocked, giving them their choice of entrances. So far out into the country and knowing sickness was everywhere, they were not afraid of intruders. A naive impulse. They walked inside and crept up the stairs unnoticed. Adil was at the front, intent on having a fruitful hunt. Even against just him, the humans didn't stand a chance. He had spent his mortal life as a fierce warrior, and his immortal one feared among other vampires.

When they entered the parlor, there was a hush. The four flew into motion, the building tension snapping apart like a tendon. Grigori grabbed the musician, burying his fangs in his neck, his lute crushed underfoot as they struggled. The blonde woman screamed, colliding into others as she ran. Wolf subdued one of the drunkest men, who was still struggling to stand. Adil and Hal began picking off those that tried to run out of the room, the rest already snared in their trap. The vivid tapestries on the wall were stained by stray spurts of blood. Wine cups crashed to the floor, shards of colored glass and pottery flying through the air. The wine ran in rivulets down the floor, soaking through the rugs and the clothes of those who were already felled.

Grigori dropped the body of the musician, completely drained. While the man was pale and sunken, Grigori's face became rosy, taking all the man had to offer. As he searched for his next kill, he met Wolf's eyes for a moment. She grinned at him, baring her bloody teeth, and turned her attention to the blonde woman, who was cowering in the corner. Wolf looked her up and down, sighing with anticipation.

"Sorry about your friends."

The woman whimpered, tears running down her cheeks.

Wolf knelt in front of her, reaching out her hand. "Serafi-na, aren't you tired?"

With Wolf's fingers of influence reaching into her mind, her eyes glazed over. She nodded, her chest still heaving with sobs.

"I can make it stop," Wolf whispered in her ear, inhaling the scent of the blood pumping underneath her flushed skin. Wolf took the girl into her arms, her head lolling back. An easeful, placid end.

Hal chased two of the other women into the closest bedroom, standing between them and the door. One pulled the other along, the wine making her stumble.

"Don't do this, please!" she shouted, the bodice of her green dress slipping as she tried to keep her friend on her feet.

Hal admired their silken dresses and sumptuous jewelry. Tired of hearing their pleading she surged towards them. As she drank from the first, she held the second in her vice-like grip. She wanted more than sustenance, but to pick off the riches from their underserving bodies. They were born into a life of complete dominion, never having to think for themselves until the plague. Even then, they had places to run to. Most weren't so blessed, only by virtue

of their lineage. As Hal drank the last of the second's blood, she enjoyed the last crescendo of the heart. It fought one last time before giving out. She sat beside them, watching their color fade. She unclasped their necklaces and earrings, wiping the drops of blood off of the emeralds and pearls. She went to the basin of water next to the canopied bed, washing the blood from her hands. She then opened the closet, looking through the other dresses.

"You're spoiled for choice, my darling," Wolf said, walking in and holding Hal from behind. Her hands and shirt were covered with a layer of dried blood.

"I am," she replied, leaning her head onto Wolf's shoulder. "What do you think would look best on me?"

Wolf lifted up a blue dress fringed with lace. "That would look nice with the pearls."

"Want to help me get changed?" Hal asked, turning around in her arms.

Wolf smiled.

"Only if I get a kiss first."

Adil stalked downstairs, searching for the last straggler. He had taken off his coat, exposing the tattoos that ran up and down his arms. Him and his companions had taken care of all the others, but he wasn't going to let this one go to waste. As he walked, he listened for the sound of a heartbeat or breathing. This boy was cleverer than the rest, knowing it was better to run and save himself than worry about the rest. Adil paused

in front of a pantry. It was faint, but he heard short, panicked breaths. He turned the knob and threw open the door. He was huddled in the back of the pantry, running the beads of his rosary through his fingers and muttering a prayer. He kept his head down as Adil approached him. All he had left was his faith in getting to Heaven. He knew he would see those he lost to the plague on the other side.

Adil stooped by him, taking hold of the rosary. He passed the small cross between his fingers.

"I am older than your God," Adil said, stroking the boy's cheek. "And what God lets his people suffer as yours has these last years?"

The boy stared at him, wide-eyed.

"You can keep praying to him if you'd like," Adil said, pushing the boy's curly hair away from his neck. As he bit down, the boy's words barely faltered. His mantra only ended when his eyes rolled back and his lungs no longer took in enough air. Perhaps he would reach the heaven he dreamed of. No religion had ever served Adil well, but he saw what they did for others. One light in a sea of darkness.

Grigori lay on the floor, amidst piles of feathers from several cushions. Blood dripped down his chin, pooling on the stone floor under him. He had never drunk himself to such a point of gluttony. Having fresh, succulent blood after so long being on the brink of starvation, scrounging for a single person who wasn't ravaged by the dreaded disease, had been unthinkable. Him and his companions had rampaged through the entirety of the estate,

like sucking the marrow from every bone after a feast. The sounds of the night soaked in, his senses going haywire from such a large infusion of blood. Adil walked in, grinning when he saw the state Grigori was in. When Grigori noticed him, he looked up and laughed. Adil laughed back, lying next to him.

Grigori's pupils were blown and his chestnut hair tinged with red. He put his arms around Adil and they enjoyed the newfound warmth in each others' bodies.

"Where did you go?" Grigori whispered.

"I found the last one," Adil said.

"Oh, lucky you," he said, pouting.

"You had your fill, beautiful boy," Adil said, wiping blood from the corner of Grigori's mouth.

He laughed again, waiting for Adil to stop talking. As they kissed, the blood of all their victims intermingled on their lips. Companions, through the sublime and the bleak.

The manor was their shelter for the coming day. Then they would leave it behind, never to return. It had served its purpose. A needed windfall, breaking up the tedium of fighting for their very existence. When would the fever of Europe finally break, letting them rise from the desperation they found themselves in? They had no choice but to see it through, side by side.



Venom

by Triton

There's a slick shadow in the newsroom,
eyes glinting like knives under fluorescent
lights.

It moves between the desks,
all teeth and silence,
drinking from the cup of swallowed voices.
Politeness is its venom,
slipped into smiles,
dropped into meetings like sugar in poison.
It hisses compliments that sting,
and every nod tightens its coil.
It doesn't roar, it calculates.
It doesn't fight, it erases.
voices vanish, our will dissolves,
truth bends under its gaze
until the walls of the newsroom
become a cage

lined with your quiet compliance.
This monster wears credentials like chains,
armor forged from the comfort of those too blind
or too scared to act.

It eats attention, feasts on your hesitation,
and leaves only the hollow echo of erased
words.

But I've learned the rhythm of its fangs,
the pulse beneath the mask.

I know the snap of jaws before they strike,
the poison in the smile that pretends to be safe.
And I will not be quiet.

I will not shrink.

I will name the shadow
without whispering its name.

Because venom loses its power
when you stare it down,
when you speak the truth it tries to devour.
Its reign ends the moment we stop pretending
the hiss is harmless.



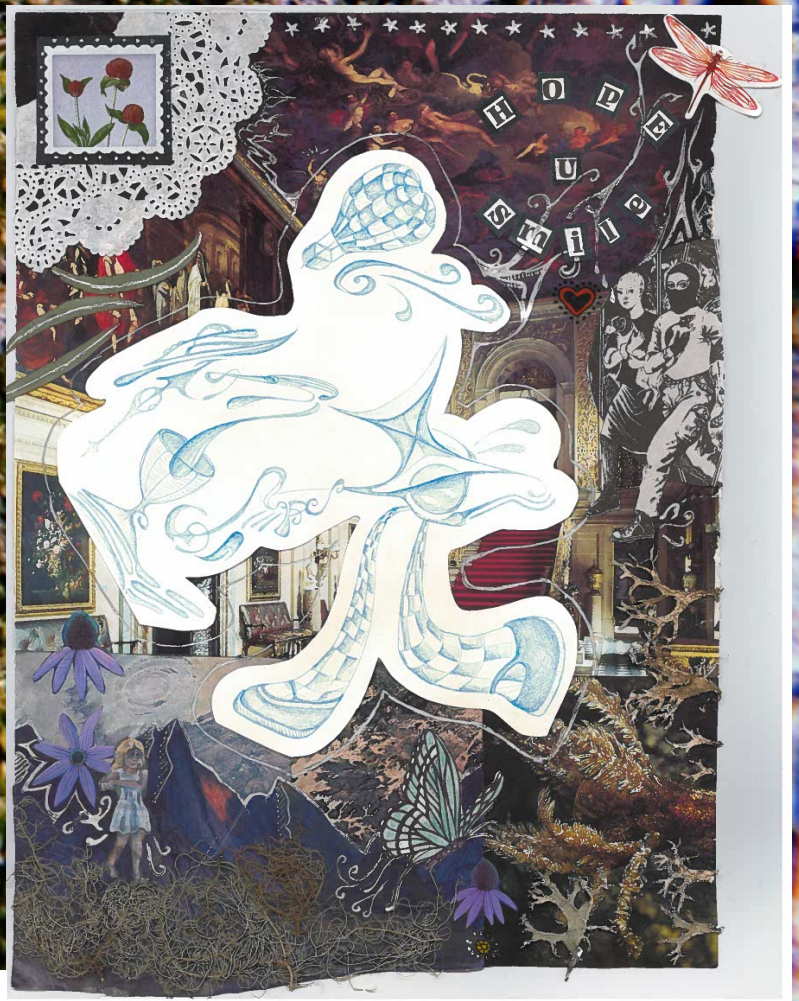
by Rebecca Kartchner

A painting of a hand reaching out of dark, swirling water. The hand is light-skinned and positioned in the center, with fingers slightly spread. The water is depicted with deep blues and greens, showing turbulent, swirling currents. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the hand against the dark, moody background. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber.

Collage (upper right) created by
Rebecca Kartchner, painting by Raven Tigerlily,
Background by Kat

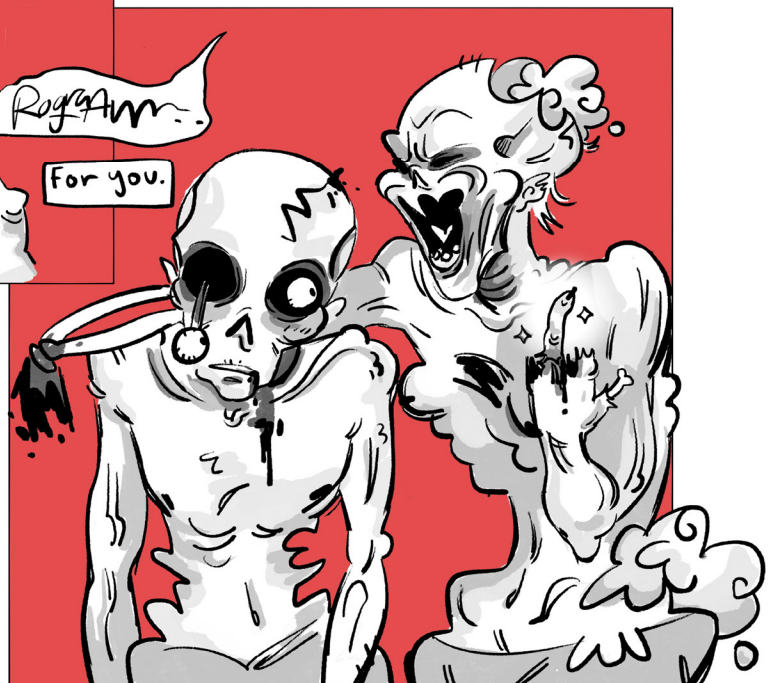
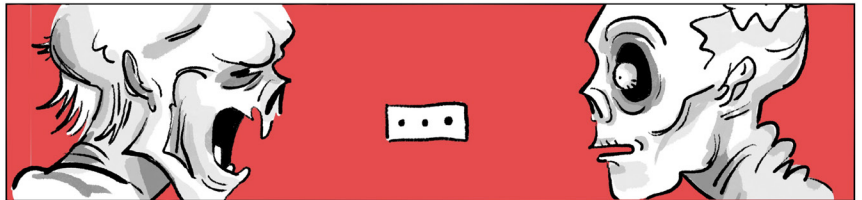
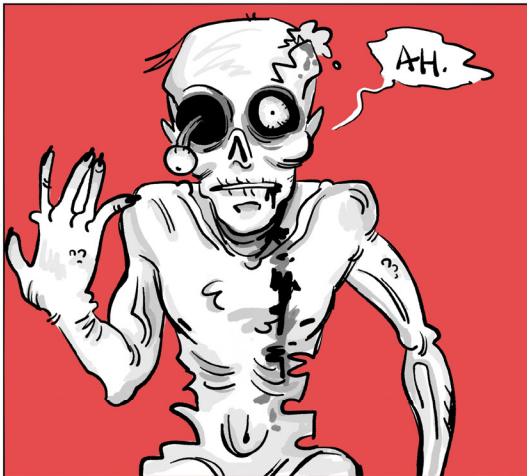
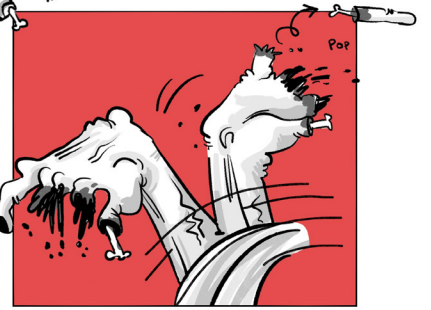
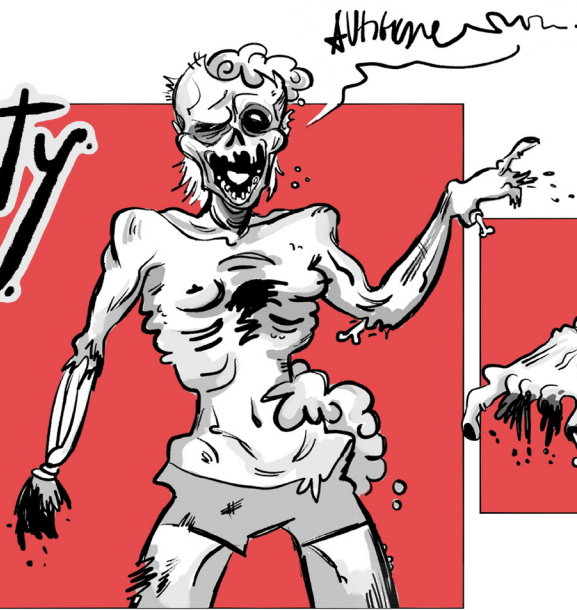


"Synesthetic portrait" illustrated by Ellie Urbancic (above)



Collage made by Flora (right)

Body Positivity



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